

## THE ASPIRA STORY

ASPIRA was created in 1961. It was organized by a group of people who were concerned about the educational opportunities being offered to Puerto Ricans. Today ASPIRA Inc. of New Jersey is but one of the various ASPIRA agencies throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Some of the fundamental objectives that ASPIRA has set for itself are:

- To promote social change in the Puerto Rican-Latino community.
- To help develop leadership skills in Puerto Rican-Latino youth.
- To provide guidance and orientation on educational and career opportunities.
- To address the needs of the Puerto Rican-Latino community.

ASPIRA's fundamental goal is to improve the social and economic situation of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos in the United States and Puerto Rico.

Although founded to aid the cause of Puerto Ricans and Latinos, ASPIRA has never refused services to anyone needing them. As a result, many other ethnic and national groups have received aid from ASPIRA. In New Jersey, 40% of those students served at the Essex County Center are African American and/or non-Hispanic.

ASPIRA achieves its objectives and nears its goals through its programs. The Math and Science Program is a perfect example of the type of program that helps ASPIRA to help its clientele and community.

## THE ASPIRA PROCESS

### AWARENESS:

The process of becoming aware of one's cultural, racial and ethnic background and history. Discovery of self-value and value of others.

### ANALYSIS:

The process of finding out about oneself, about other cultures, and about the world around us. Participants engage in critical thinking, including scrutiny and inquiry. In doing so, one expands knowledge and value of self and others while appreciating skills necessary for life's long task of living.

### ACTION:

The process of putting the knowledge and skills one has acquired to use for the benefit of self and others, especially of one's family and community.

The ASPIRA Process is a continuous one. At first, students may have to make a conscious effort to become aware, analyze and act. Later, as they mature, gain experience, knowledge and skills, they begin to automatically apply the process throughout their lives. By helping youths to establish pride in their background and own individuality. They are able to exercise individual potential within the context of the more complex, larger society. ASPIRA creates a climate of concern for others. It provides an opportunity for students to learn to take responsibility for themselves and to develop a sense of autonomy, self-determination and esteem. It develops motivation and a desire in each participant to change his or her own situation.



# **GOALS FOR ASPIRA, INC. OF NEW JERSEY**

- **Engender a value for education**
- **Engender a value for the important role of a viable community through awareness and participation**
- **Strengthening a positive self identity**
- **Develop leadership skills**
- **Encourage cultural awareness and participation**
- **Develop parent awareness of educational programs and policies that affect their children**
- **The strengthening of Alumni and Friends of ASPIRA**



The "pitirre" is the symbol of ASPIRA. A small, fragile tropical bird found in Puerto Rico, the "pitirre" is known for its agility and rapid flight and for its ability to outwit, tire and defeat much larger birds. ASPIRA believes that the "pitirre" is a fitting symbol for young Latinos. Aspirantes gain the confidence of the "pitirre" by acquiring knowledge and developing leadership skills. They then can face and overcome seemingly overwhelming odds to become productive adults, returning to their communities the benefits of their skills and leadership.